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ABSTRACT

All (172) second grade nonreaders in Title I schools received structured tutoring from intermediate age youngsters 15 minutes per day, four days per week for five months in a program to remediate reading skills. Control Subjects were randomly selected, without regard for reading ability, from the total grade 2 population of three non-Title I schools. Tutors spent another, equivalent period of time learning how to teach names of letters, sounds of letters and digraphs, sound blending, decoding of new words and sight words, and in learning to listen to the child read orally from primers and workbooks. Following instruction, 20 tutorees scored 100% on the criterion test, 73 scored 90% or above, and 102 scored 80% or above. For the total sample, 72% scored 80% or above on the criterion test, 20% scored between 60% and 80%, and 8% scored between 0% and 60%. Parents of both tutors and tutorees were enthusiastic about the children's improved reading skills and increased interest in reading. Teachers of tutors were initially and subsequently enthusiastic and cooperative in granting released class time; despite some initial skepticism, virtually all teachers of tutorees acknowledged the improved skills of the former nonreaders. (Author/RD)

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THE USE OF A STRUCTURED TUTORIAL READING PROGRAM IN TEACHING NONREADING SECOND GRADERS IN TITLE I SCHOOLS TO READ[1]

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OBJECTIVES OF THE INQUIRY

Traditional approaches to remediating children who do not learn to read in the first grade have proven ineffective. As a result, problems compound for a child who enters the second grade without being able to read adequately, and reading deficiencies are likely to become more and more acute on into secondary grades. Unless more effective approaches for remediating reading deficiencies at the primary grade level are found, perennial problems will hound and cripple students who do not learn to read adequately.

Since solving reading deficiency problems early is an urgent need, the prime objective of this study was to investigate how effective a structured tutorial reading program could be in helping second-graders with reading problems.

The carefully prescribed procedures and techniques of structured tutoring are an extension of and conform to basic tenets of programmed instruction. Particular features of structured tutoring make it a superior form of individualized instruction; for example, it is the first form of individualized instruction capable of truly monitoring oral response. It is also the first form of individualized instruction capable of monitoring the student's behavior while he interacts with the instructional materials. Computers cannot duplicate the flexibility of structured tutoring and the cost of the program is nominal.

Since structured tutoring is a teaching technique and not just a set of materials, it can be adapted to any subject matter. The individual learning characteristics of the child are given special attention through sensitive techniques and procedures which maximize learning gains. Preliminary research has already suggested that the many advantages of structured tutoring give it an unlimited potential for individualizing and adapting instruction at the primary grade level.

PROCEDURES

Identification of Nonreaders

For the purposes of this study, a nonreader was defined as any second grader unable to read previously unencountered single syllable phonetically readable words.

A criterion-referenced diagnostic pretest was constructed that would provide a valid measure of a child's ability to (1) name the letters of the alphabet when they were presented randomly, (2) produce the most common sounds of consonants (except c), (3) produce the short sounds of vowels, (4) produce the sounds of digraphs, and (5) decode (sound out) single syllable phonetically readable nonsense words.

The diagnostic pretest was administered by a trained team of examiners to individual second graders in the ten Title I schools participating in the study. Only those children (172) who evidenced no phonetic skills (unable to read the single syllable nonsense words) were selected to participate in the study.

Training of Supervisors

One member of the staff in each of the participating schools was

designated as a supervisor and then trained to manage the tutorial system developed and validated by Dr. Grant Von Harrison. His system utilizes upper-grade elementary students as tutors for younger children who cannot read. The following are system components: (1) User's Guide, (2) pre and posttest, (3) record sheets, (4) instructional materials, (5) scope and sequence of instructional objectives, and (6) tutor training materials.

The tutor training materials train the student tutors in the use of validated tutoring techniques and procedures commensurate with each of the following instructional roles: (1) teaching names of letters, (2) teaching the sounds of letters and digraphs, (3) teaching the child to blend sounds, (4) teaching the child to decode new words, (5) teaching sight words, and (6) listening to the child when he reads orally from a primer or workbook.

The supervisors' roles consisted of (1) transposing the data from the diagnostic pretest to individual profile sheets, (2) training the student tutors in the use of the validated tutoring techniques and procedures, (3) assigning the student tutors to work on a specific instructional prescription with a child, (4) checking the children for mastery of each instructional prescription, (5) maintaining for each child a profile sheet that reported the date instructional prescriptions were made, the date the child demonstrated mastery of each instructional prescription, the date and performance of the child when subsequent mastery checks were made for each objective the student tutor had helped the child master, and (6) monitoring the student tutors to insure they were consistently using the specified techniques and procedures.

Tutoring

Where the tutoring was conducted in the schools was determined by the principals. In four of the ten schools the tutoring was conducted in a special classroom; in the six other schools it was conducted in the halls, the auditorium, the child's classroom, the stage, or the library. The number of student tutors was equal to the number of nonreaders identified in each school. The student tutors were released from a class to serve as tutors and spent an average of two hours a week working in the program (four times per week for one half hour). It was stipulated that if a student tutor did not keep up with the work in his own class, he would not be allowed to serve. The children were tutored four days per week for five months, each tutoring session averaging approximately fifteen minutes.

DATA SOURCE

Because this study's purpose was to remediate children and not merely to show significant gains over children enrolled in traditional forms of remedial reading programs, all nonreader children in the Title I schools received tutorial instruction. The controls were randomly selected with no regard to their reading ability from the total population of second graders in three non Title I schools.[1]

A team of examiners not affiliated with the school districts was trained to administer the criterion-referenced posttest which consisted of

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[1]Testing in the fall substantiated that children in non Title I schools had significantly greater ability to decode previously unencountered phonetically readable words than children in Title I schools.

forty-four nonsense words ranging in complexity from single syllable words without blends to multiple syllable words composed of every consonant sound, every short vowel sound, every digraph sound, and initial and final blends. The posttest was administered individually to every child in the program and to a random sample of children from the non Title I schools. The examiners were not told what the objectives of the study were or what schools were participating in the study.

RESULTS

The tables on the following pages report the criterion test data for the tutored nonreader children in the Title I schools and the criterion test data for the randomly selected children in the three non Title I schools.

TABLE I

Mean scores on the 44-Item Criterion Test for Nonreading Second Graders in the Title I Schools Participating in the Structured Tutoring Reading Program.

		44-Item Criterion Test		
Title I Schools	Number of Pupils *	Number Correct	Percent Correct	Standard Deviation
S^1	20	38	86.4	5.82
S^2	15	41.2	93.6	3.10
S^3	15	32	72.7	7.38
S^4	15	39.1	88.9	5.68
S^5	15	38.3	87.0	5.06
S^6	19	38.9	88.4	5.35
S^7	13	29.7	67.5	11.72
S^8	11	32.2	73.2	12.10
S^9	19	38.5	87.2	6.41
S^{10}	14	38.1	86.9	4.56
Average	15.6	36.7	83.4	7.49

*These are the pupils on whom criteria data were obtained. Because some of the pupils no longer lived in the school district, the total is lower than the total reported in the text.

TABLE II

Mean Scores on the 44-Item Criterion Test for the Random Sample of Second Graders in the NonTitle I Schools Who Did Not Participate in the Structured Tutoring Reading Program

	44-Item Criterion Test			
NonTitle I Schools	Number of Pupils	Number Correct	Percent Correct	Standard Deviation
S^1	15	37.8	85.9	11.70
S^2	15	37.6	85.5	10.98
S^3	15	37.7	85.7	11.30
Average	15	37.7	85.7	11.32

DISCUSSION

When pretested, a majority of the nonreader children (unable to decode simple words previously unencountered) were unable to produce the sounds of several consonants. A large majority of the same children could not produce the sounds of all five short vowels. None of the same children could produce the sounds of the six most common digraphs. Consequently, in addition to teaching the children how to decode previously unencountered words, the student tutors had to teach a significant percentage of the sounds.

The upper-grade elementary students selected to be tutors were proud to be chosen and with very few exceptions proved to be very effective. Little difficulty was experienced with dependability, discipline, etc. Tutors selected ranged from high to low ability and from age 10 (4th grade) to 12 (6th grade). Only two students were discontinued because they failed to stay current in their own class work and none of them requested to be relieved of their responsibility. They continued to serve until the end of the school year. (Note: The criteria data was collected the later part of April)

Based on the comments of parents made during parent-teacher conferences, it was concluded that a large majority of the parents of the student tutors and the tutored children reacted favorably to the program. Numerous parents of the student tutors commented on specific benefits to their children (e.g., enhanced ability to relate to younger siblings). Many parents of the tutored children reported drastic changes in their children's general attitude toward reading (e.g., willingness to read, ability to

sound out words for the first time).

When the tutorial program was introduced in the schools, the teachers of the upper-grade elementary students from which the tutors were selected responded very favorably and were very cooperative. However, there were several skeptical second grade teachers who were openly critical in a few instances. By the end of the study, however, the vast majority of the second grade teachers were responding enthusiastically to the program. Only one teacher expressed dissatisfaction at the end of the school year. Most of the second grade teachers frequently remarked on the obvious progress and definite improvements in reading ability their children were making in the classroom.

It was almost impossible to coordinate the structured tutorial reading program specifically with the children's classroom reading because so many different reading series (e.g., Sullivan, Scott, Foresman, Lippincott, Economy) were being used by the various second grade teachers. This problem, however, was minimized by the children's acquisition of important skills while progressing rapidly through the objectives of the structured tutoring reading program. However, in that the impetus of the tutorial program was on basic phonetic skills, there was more classroom carry-over if the reading series being used by the classroom teacher were basically phonetic (e.g., SRA, Palo Alto, Sullivan).

If the criteria data are viewed in terms of the suggested guideline of 80-80 (80% of the subjects achieving 80% criteria), the overall results fall short. Twenty of the children scored 100% on the criterion test, 73 scored

90% or above and 102 scored 80% or above. For the total sample, 72% scored 80% or above on the criterion test, 20% scored between 60% and 80% on the criterion test and 8% scored between 0% and 60% on the criterion test.

The positive response of the tutored children to the program was evidenced in a host of ways throughout the study. Several characteristics accounting for this response follow: (1) the consistent individualized attention, (2) the consistent verbal praise, (3) the high probability of success built into the program, (4) the fact that the majority of the children were able to read their first story within two or three weeks, (5) the rapid progress the program made possible, (6) the insurance that the child had mastered one objective before he was allowed to move to the next objective, (7) the special recognition the children received for success, and (8) the structure which permitted a student to see his progress in relationship to specified objectives.

Although the prescribed program was adapted more fully in some schools than in others, with the exception of three schools, all aspects of the program were followed quite closely. In three of the schools the supervisors omitted one aspect of the program. In these three schools, the mean scores were (S^3 32, S^7 29.7, S^8 32.2). If we eliminate these scores and average the scores of the seven Title I schools in which the supervisors followed all aspects of the program, the average mean score is higher than that for the non Title I schools. Such results point to the structured tutoring reading program as an effective means of remediating nonreading second graders, if the program is implemented properly. Provisions were made in

the two participating school districts to make the program permanent and expand it to include the first, third and fourth grades.